

Representations of Violence and Views Toward Men in Nawal El Saadawi's Novel *Woman at Point Zero*: Simone de Beauvoir Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

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Point Zero*

Violence against women is a social issue that does not only occur in real life but is also reflected and constructed through literary works as cultural texts. From the perspective of communication studies, the novel is understood as a medium that actively produces and represents meanings about gender relations to its audience. This study examines the representation of violence experienced by the character Firdaus and her views toward men in Nawal El Saadawi's novel *Woman at Point Zero*. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach through library research and document analysis, this study analyzes selected excerpts categorized into two groups: excerpts depicting Firdaus's experiences of violence and excerpts reflecting her views toward men. The analysis was conducted using Stuart Hall's theory of representation through a constructionist approach encompassing the conceptual system and the language system, as well as Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism through the concepts of The Other and immanence-transcendence. The findings reveal that *Woman at Point Zero* represents the violence experienced by Firdaus as a systematic and structural pattern that permeates multiple institutional domains family, marriage, personal relations, and the state perpetrated by different male figures yet consistently constructing the same knowledge: that Firdaus's subordinate position as an object is normalized across all layers of society. This cross-institutional accumulation of violence drives Firdaus's existential journey from immanence as a passive The Other toward transcendence as a critically conscious subject, manifesting in six progressive dimensions of her views toward men from existential anger to total structural rejection of the patriarchal system.

1. Introduction

Violence against women is a pressing global social problem with serious consequences for women's rights, health, and well-being across diverse cultural and national contexts. According to the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, violence against women is defined as any gender-based act that may result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats, coercion, or deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private spheres (Lewoleba, 2022). The most recent global report by the World Health Organization (2025) estimates that approximately 840 million women nearly one in three worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, sexual violence by a non-partner, or both, at least once in their lifetime, confirming that this is a global structural phenomenon rather than an isolated occurrence.

This phenomenon is not only visible in everyday social reality but is also actively constructed and disseminated through literary works. Literary works serve as a mirror of social life and as a critical instrument for articulating issues that must be brought to public attention (Sholikah, 2024). In the context of communication studies, the novel is understood as a cultural text that produces and represents meanings about gender relations. The representation of violence against women in a novel is not a neutral reflection of reality, it is an active construction of meaning that shapes how audiences understand the relationship between violence, gender, and power making the study of such novels an important domain within communication studies.

One of the most significant literary works addressing this reality within a patriarchal cultural context is *Woman at Point Zero* (Imra'a 'inda nuqtat al-sifr) by Nawal El Saadawi a radical Egyptian feminist, writer, physician, and psychiatrist who dedicated her life to advocating for women's rights (see Figure 1). Born on 22 October 1931 in Kafr Tahla, Egypt, El Saadawi wrote the novel based on direct research conducted with women at Qanatir Prison, grounding the narrative in real lived experiences (Pirdaus & Fahmi, 2025). Written in 1975 and first published in Arabic in 1977, the novel is set in Egypt during the 1970s a period of social transition in which the country, as part of the Arab world, still maintained a strong patriarchal system that placed women in a profoundly subordinate position (Pirdaus & Fahmi, 2025; Maghfirah & Sobur, 2023).



Figure 1. Cover of *Woman at Point Zero*

Source: Personal documentation (El Saadawi, 2025)

The central character, Firdaus, endures multiple forms of violence and injustice within Egyptian patriarchal society. As identified by Zahra'ni et al. (2025), Firdaus experiences violence from her father who beats her when she makes a request, her uncle who sexually abuses her from an early age, her husband who physically assaults and mistreats her, a pimp who rapes and confines her, and police officers who exploit and sexually abuse her. The recurring and systematic nature of these experiences' shapes Firdaus's views toward men as agents who consistently function as perpetrators of oppression. El Saadawi (2025) captures this through Firdaus's declaration: "*All the men I had known, each one of them, had not fired in me anything but the single desire to lift my hand and hit them across the face*" (p. 16) a statement that directs contempt not at specific individuals but at men as the embodiment of patriarchal power.

Several previous studies have examined the character of Firdaus from various perspectives. Syah et al. (2021) and Saniro (2024) applied Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminist perspective to analyze Firdaus's existence and forms of gender injustice, focusing on how she asserts her presence amid patriarchal domination. Nuraulia et al. (2025) used a Marxist feminist lens to analyze Firdaus's oppression under capitalism and patriarchy. Zahra'ni et al. (2025) employed Gayatri Spivak's postcolonial feminism to examine Firdaus's layered oppression as a subaltern woman. Lakda et al. (2024) used a sociological approach to identify forms of social pathology in the novel.

Despite these contributions, a significant analytical gap remains: none of the existing studies has specifically examined the causal relationship between the cumulative experiences of violence across different institutional domains and the formation of Firdaus's structurally oriented views toward men as a collective representation of patriarchal power. While Syah et al. (2021) and Saniro (2024) used the same theoretical lens as the present study, they focused on Firdaus's general existential condition rather than on the specific process by which accumulated violence drives increasingly structural

views toward men. The present study addresses this gap by analyzing how violence categorized by type and institutional context shapes Firdaus's existential journey from immanence to transcendence and forms her progressive views toward men.

To analyze this process, the study integrates two complementary theoretical frameworks. Stuart Hall's theory of representation through a constructionist approach (Hall et al., 2024) is used to analyze how the novel, as a cultural text, constructs meanings about violence and gender relations through its conceptual and language systems. Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism through the concepts of The Other and immanence-transcendence (Tong & Botts, 2024) is used to explain how the accumulation of violent experiences drives Firdaus's existential transformation from a passive The Other toward a critically conscious subject. The aims of this study are: (1) to identify the forms of violence represented in the novel, (2) to analyze the representation of Firdaus's views toward men formed through those experiences, and (3) to explain these views using Beauvoir's existential feminist framework.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research is a method for exploring and understanding meanings derived from social or human problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2023), while descriptive research in communication studies aims to systematically describe the facts and characteristics of the object under investigation (Kriyantono, 2021). This approach is chosen because the study aims to analyze and describe representations constructed through the textual practices of the novel, rather than to measure variables or test hypotheses.

The subject of the study is the character Firdaus in *Woman at Point Zero* by Nawal El Saadawi. Firdaus is selected because she is the primary character who experiences multiple forms of physical, sexual, psychological/verbal, and economic/structural violence throughout the narrative, representing the experiences of women within Egypt's patriarchal system. The object of the study is the novel itself written in 1975 and first published in Arabic in 1977 by Dar al-Adab, Beirut. This study uses the Indonesian translation published by Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia 21st edition, 2025, with all quoted passages rendered in English to facilitate international readability.

Data were collected through library research and document analysis. According to Sugiyono (2022), library research involves collecting data by reading, recording, and processing materials from various written sources. Primary data consist of selected excerpts from the novel, categorized based on their relevance to two focal areas: (1) Firdaus's experiences of violence, categorized by type physical, sexual, psychological/verbal, and economic/structural, and (2) Firdaus's views toward men, categorized by thematic dimension of consciousness. This thematic categorization approach, recommended by the thesis supervisor, captures the systematic patterns of violence more effectively than a fixed quota of excerpts. Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, articles, and previous studies addressing the theoretical frameworks and the novel.

Data collection proceeded through four stages: (1) thorough and repeated reading of the novel to understand its narrative arc, characterization, and socio-cultural context, (2) identification and selection of relevant textual passages, (3) categorization of the data according to predetermined thematic categories, and (4) collection of supporting theoretical and empirical literature. Data validity was ensured through theoretical triangulation (Moleong, 2021) using Hall's theory of representation and Beauvoir's existential feminism as two complementary frameworks to cross-check and build a comprehensive understanding of the causal relationship between Firdaus's experiences of violence and her views toward men.

Data analysis followed an adapted version of Miles and Huberman's interactive model (Sugiyono, 2022) expanded with theoretical analysis stages, comprising five steps: (1) data reduction selecting data relevant to the research focus, (2) data presentation organizing data into thematic categories, (3) representational analysis using Hall's constructionist approach through the conceptual and language systems, (4) existential feminist analysis using Beauvoir's concepts of The Other and immanence-transcendence and (5) conclusion drawing integrating findings from both frameworks to answer the research question.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

Based on a thorough reading of *Woman at Point Zero*, data were identified and organized into two primary groups following the principles of qualitative data analysis outlined by Moleong (2021): (1) Firdaus's experiences of violence, categorized by type, and (2) Firdaus's views toward men, categorized by thematic dimension of consciousness. These are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1. Categorization of Data: Firdaus's Experiences of Violence

No	Category	Excerpt	Character	Page
1	Physical Violence	<i>"Ia memukul tangan dan pundak saya serta menghardik, 'Aku tak punya piaster.'"</i> <i>("He hit my hands and shoulders and shouted: 'I don't have a piastre.'")</i>	Father	124
2	Physical Violence	<i>"Pada suatu peristiwa, ia memukul seluruh badan saya dengan sepatunya. Muka dan badan saya menjadi bengkak dan memar."</i> <i>("On one occasion he beat me all over my body with his shoe. My face and body became swollen and bruised.")</i>	Husband	83
3	Physical Violence	<i>"Suatu hari ia memukul saya dengan tongkatnya yang berat sampai darah keluar dari hidung dan telinga saya."</i> <i>("One day he beat me with his heavy stick until the blood ran from my nose and ears.")</i>	Husband	85
4	Physical Violence	<i>"Ia meninju saya dengan kepalannya pada perut dengan begitu kerasnya sehingga saya langsung tak sadarkan diri."</i> <i>("He punched me in the stomach with his fist so hard that I lost consciousness immediately.")</i>	Bayoumi	95
5	Sexual Violence	<i>"Saya dapat merasakan tangan itu menjelajahi kaki saya sampai paha dengan gerakan yang gemetaran dan sangat berhati-hati... tangannya akan terus menekan paha saya dengan meremas secara kasar."</i> <i>("I could feel the hand exploring my leg up to the thigh with a trembling, very careful movement... his hand continued pressing my thigh with rough kneading.")</i>	Uncle	22
6	Sexual Violence	<i>"Ia pulang tengah malam, menarik kain penutup dari tubuh saya, menampar muka saya, dan merebahkan tubuhnya di atas tubuh saya dengan seluruh berat badannya."</i> <i>("He came home at midnight, pulled the cover from my body, slapped my face, and laid his body on top of mine with his full weight.")</i>	Bayoumi	95

7	Sexual Violence	"Ia membawa saya, melalui satu lorong kecil yang sempit dan gelap ke lorong lainnya, melalui sebuah pintu kayu masuk ke dalam ruangan, lalu ia membaringkan saya di atas sebuah tempat tidur. Ia menanggalkan bajunya." ("He took me through a narrow dark alley to another, through a wooden door into a room, then laid me down on a bed. He took off his clothes.")	Police Officer	120
8	Psychological/ Verbal Violence	"Justru laki-laki yang memahami agama itulah yang suka memukul istrinya. Aturan agama mengizinkan untuk melakukan hukuman itu. Seorang istri yang bijak tidak layak mengeluh tentang suaminya. Kewajibannya adalah kepatuhan yang sempurna." ("It is precisely the men who understand religion who beat their wives. Religious rules allow this punishment. A wise wife does not complain about her husband. Her duty is complete obedience.")	Uncle	83
9	Psychological/ Verbal Violence	"Berani benar kau untuk bersuara keras jika bicara dengan aku, kau gelandangan, kau perempuan murahan?" ("How dare you raise your voice when talking to me, you vagrant, you cheap woman?")	Bayoumi	94
10	Psychological/ Verbal Violence	"Kau seorang pelacur, dan menjadi tugasku untuk menangkap kamu dan lain-lain yang sejenis denganmu. Untuk membersihkan negeri ini, dan melindungi kaum keluarga yang terhormat dari jenis kalian." ("You are a prostitute, and it is my duty to arrest you and others like you. To clean this country, and protect the respectable families from people like you.")	Police Officer	120
11	Economic/ Structural Violence	"Saya melihat mereka dari atas tembok yang tinggi dan mengamati mereka bila berangkat, mata saya mengikuti orang-orang itu dan kejadian di jalan, seperti seorang narapidana yang telah dihukum untuk melihat kehidupan dari atas sebuah tembok penjara." ("I saw them from above the high wall... like a prisoner sentenced to watch life from above a prison wall.")	Uncle	42
12	Economic/ Structural Violence	"Dia lalu mengurung saya sebelum pergi." ("He then locked me in before leaving.")	Bayoumi	95

Table 2. Categorization of Data: Firdaus's Views Toward Men

No	Thematic Dimension	Excerpt	Page
1	Men as consistent perpetrators of oppression	<i>("Semua lelaki yang saya kenal, tiap orang di antara mereka, telah mengobarkan dalam diri saya hanya satu hasrat saja: untuk mengangkat tangan saya dan menghantamkannya ke muka mereka.")</i> <i>"All the men I had known, each one of them, had not fired in me anything but the single desire to lift my hand and hit them across the face."</i>	16
2	Men as creators of the exploitation system	<i>"Saya tahu bahwa profesi saya telah diciptakan oleh lelaki, dan bahwa lelaki menguasai dua dunia kita, yang di bumi ini dan yang di alam baka. Bahwa lelaki memaksa perempuan menjual tubuh mereka dengan harga tertentu, dan bahwa tubuh yang paling murah dibayar adalah tubuh sang istri."</i> <i>("I knew that my profession had been created by men, and that men controlled both our world here on earth and the world in the hereafter. That men forced women to sell their bodies at certain prices, and that the cheapest body was that of a wife.")</i>	179
3	Paternalistic men as the most dangerous form of domination	<i>"Lelaki yang paling saya benci adalah mereka yang berusaha menasihati atau yang berkata kepada saya bahwa mereka ingin menyelamatkan saya dari kehidupan yang saya jalani... Mereka merasa diri sendiri dalam semacam peranan pahlawan sebuah peranan yang gagal mereka mainkan dalam keadaan-keadaan lainnya."</i> <i>("The men I hated most were those who tried to advise me, or said to me that they wanted to save me from the life I was living... They cast themselves in the role of a hero a role they had failed to play in other circumstances.")</i>	174
4	Structural consciousness of women's collective oppression	<i>"Semua perempuan adalah korban penipuan. Lelaki memaksakan penipuan pada perempuan, kemudian menghukum mereka karena telah tertipu, menindas mereka ke tingkat terbawah... mengikat mereka dalam perkawinan, dan menghukum mereka dengan kerja kasar sepanjang umur mereka."</i> <i>("All women are victims of deception. Men impose the deception on women, then punish them for being deceived, oppressing them to the lowest level... tying them in marriage, and punishing them with hard labor for the rest of their lives.")</i>	169–170
5	Existential consciousness: freedom as a threat to the system	<i>"Mereka menghukum saya sampai mati bukan karena saya telah membunuh seorang lelaki... tetapi karena mereka takut untuk membiarkan saya hidup. Mereka tahu bahwa selama saya masih hidup, mereka tidak akan aman."</i> <i>("They are sentencing me to death not because I killed a man... but because they are afraid to let me live. They know that as long as I am alive they will not be safe.")</i>	199

6	Total rejection of the entire patriarchal system	"Saya mengatakan bahwa kamu semua adalah penjahat, kamu semua: para ayah, paman, suami, geromo, pengacara, dokter, wartawan, dan semua lelaki dari semua profesi." ("I said that you are all criminals you: the fathers, uncles, husbands, pimps, lawyers, doctors, journalists, and all men of all professions.")	198
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3.2 Discussion

3.2.1. Representation of Violence Experienced by Firdaus

Physical Violence: The Female Body as a Site of Male Power

Physical violence against Firdaus is perpetrated by three male figures from distinct institutional positions her father in the family, her husband in marriage, and Bayoumi in an exploitative relationship forming a cross-institutional pattern. The violence from the father, triggered by a child's ordinary request *"He hit my hands and shoulders and shouted: 'I don't have a piastre'"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 124), is rendered without emotional elaboration. Through Hall's constructionist approach (Hall et al., 2024), this extreme brevity constructs the meaning that such violence is so routine as to require no explanation. In Beauvoir's framework, the father is the first figure to position the girl as The Other the first authority in whose eyes a girl learns that her existence holds no inherent value (Tong & Botts, 2024). Heise et al. (2019) confirm that violence against women has structural roots in cultural norms that grant men authority over women from within the family, norms that then travel across institutions.

Within marriage, El Saadawi presents two escalating scenes of the husband's violence: *"On one occasion he beat me all over my body with his shoe. My face and body became swollen and bruised"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 83), followed by *"One day he beat me with his heavy stick until the blood ran from my nose and ears"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 83). The language system (Hall et al., 2024) consistently places the husband as the grammatical subject who acts he beats while Firdaus appears only as a body enduring the consequences. This linguistic construction materializes Beauvoir's concept of immanence: women are locked into a position where they are reduced to passive objects controlled by others, having exchanged their freedom for a security that ultimately proves false (Tong & Botts, 2024). DeKeseredy (2021) reinforces this, explaining that perpetrators of domestic violence operate from a sense of entitlement over their partner's body rooted in patriarchal norms internalized through gender socialization.

Bayoumi's transformation from apparent helper to perpetrator *"He punched me in the stomach with his fist so hard that I lost consciousness immediately"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 95) constructs a further representational layer (Hall et al., 2024): the greatest danger to Firdaus arrives precisely from those who present themselves as protectors. Irmayani et al. (2024) identify this paradox in the same novel, noting that violence against Firdaus emerges within spaces that society constructs as safe for women. Taken across all three institutional perpetrators, physical violence is not a random occurrence but a systematic pattern spanning every institution that should have protected Firdaus.

Sexual and Verbal Violence: Language as the Instrument of Stripping Women's Bodily Rights

Sexual violence against Firdaus is perpetrated by three actors from different institutional contexts her uncle in the family, Bayoumi in a personal exploitative relationship, and a police officer as state apparatus. Crucially, in the novel sexual violence never appears in isolation: it is always accompanied by verbal violence, both operating as a mutually reinforcing system in which language first strips the victim of her subject status before her body is physically violated.

The uncle's childhood abuse *"I could feel the hand exploring my leg up to the thigh with a trembling, very careful movement... his hand continued pressing my thigh with rough kneading"* (El

Saadawi, 2025, p. 22) is followed, years later, by his verbal silencing when Firdaus attempts to report her husband's violence: *"It is precisely the men who understand religion who beat their wives. Religious rules allow this punishment. A wise wife does not complain about her husband. Her duty is complete obedience"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 83). The novel's conceptual system (Hall et al., 2024) constructs women's obedience as a moral and religious virtue, redefining violence as divinely sanctioned discipline. The uncle thus controls Firdaus through two mechanisms across different life stages: bodily violation in childhood and vocal silencing in adulthood the most fundamental condition of The Other, whose body never belongs to herself and whose language never possesses the authority to name injustice (Tong & Botts, 2024). Cinquegrana et al. (2023) describe this as psychological revictimization: victims are made to believe their suffering results from their own moral failure.

Bayoumi's pattern is parallel but spatially more explicit. He confines Firdaus and each night *"pulled the cover from my body, slapped my face, and laid his body on top of mine with his full weight"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 95), while simultaneously labeling her: *"How dare you raise your voice when talking to me, you vagrant, you cheap woman?"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 94). The series of active verbs pulled, slapped, laid with no corresponding response from Firdaus constructs her body as a passive object, while the labels construct her as someone with no right to protest. Both dimensions lock each other in place: the violated body has no voice to resist, and any voice that attempts to speak is immediately punished. Hamamra et al. (2025) find that repeated demeaning language in environments already defining women as subordinate renders verbal violence unrecognizable as abuse, naturalized instead as a hierarchy.

The most structurally revealing form comes from the police officer, where El Saadawi explicitly sequences verbal violence before sexual violence. The officer first constructs his justification: *"You are a prostitute, and it is my duty to arrest you and others like you. To clean this country, and protect the respectable families from people like you"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 120) only then taking Firdaus *"through a narrow dark alley to another, through a wooden door into a room, then laid me down on a bed. He took off his clothes"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 120). Hall's constructionist approach reveals the mechanism: before a woman's body can be harmed, she must first be discursively removed from the category of subjects deserving protection (Hall et al., 2024). The choice of "my duty" rather than a personal expression depersonalizes the violence as institutional obligation. González-Fernández (2023) explains that labeling a victim as immoral by a figure of authority is a discursive mechanism that legitimizes institutional violence, transforming victims into parties deemed deserving of such treatment and shielding perpetrators from accountability. In Beauvoir's framework, this confirms that no institution from family to state stands outside the patriarchal system that positions women as The Other (Tong & Botts, 2024), corroborated by Addison (2020) in her analysis of the same novel.

Economic and Structural Violence: Confinement as Control

Beyond overt forms of violence, Firdaus experiences structural violence through the systematic restriction of her freedom of movement and access to resources. When living with her uncle in Cairo, she describes feeling *"like a prisoner sentenced to watch life from above a prison wall"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 42). The novel's conceptual system (Hall et al., 2024) constructs the restriction of women's mobility as a socially legitimized form of imprisonment enacted not with iron bars but with norms dictating that women must remain indoors under male supervision. In Beauvoir's framework, this restriction directly sustains immanence: without freedom of movement, Firdaus cannot access the world beyond her uncle's house, and without that access she cannot assert herself as a free subject (Tong & Botts, 2024).

Bayoumi then literalizes this confinement: *"He then locked me in before leaving"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 95). Physical confinement extends economic confinement Firdaus has no means of escape because she has no access to any resource outside Bayoumi's control. Lakda et al. (2024) identify this as a form of social pathology rooted in the structural economic dependency of women, where the absence of women's economic access is not a personal condition but a product of a system that systematically forecloses women's material independence. Together, the twelve data points across four categories construct a unified representational system: violence against Firdaus is neither accidental nor individual, but a structured feature of patriarchal institutions.

3.2.2. Representation of Firdaus's Views Toward Men

Firdaus's views toward men do not emerge abruptly but develop through six progressive dimensions of consciousness, each rooted in and advancing beyond the previous, forming a trajectory from reactive anger to full structural critique.

The first-dimension men as consistent perpetrators of oppression is articulated in the novel's opening: *"All the men I had known, each one of them, had not fired in me anything but the single desire to lift my hand and hit them across the face"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 16). In Hall's constructionist framework, the word "all" is a decisive representational choice: it refuses exception and marks Firdaus's view as a conclusion drawn from consistent experience rather than individual reaction (Hall et al., 2024). Critically, the language system here positions Firdaus as the observing, concluding subject a sharp contrast to her grammatically passive role in all violence scenes. In Beauvoir's framework, this marks the earliest movement toward transcendence: Firdaus begins observing the pattern of her suffering rather than merely enduring it (Tong & Botts, 2024). Addison (2020) identifies this as the starting point of Firdaus's radical feminist consciousness.

The second-dimension men as creators of the exploitation system reveals the economic logic underlying Firdaus's condition: *"I knew that my profession had been created by men, and that men controlled both our world here on earth and the world in the hereafter. That men forced women to sell their bodies at certain prices, and that the cheapest body was that of a wife"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 179). This statement performs two analytical operations through Hall's conceptual system: it dismantles the patriarchal binary between the virtuous wife and the immoral sex worker, and inverts the moral hierarchy declaring the wife's body the most economically exploited. In Beauvoir's framework, this represents Firdaus's grasp of the material dimension of her condition as The Other: women are reduced to bodies with exchange value in a market controlled by men (Tong & Botts, 2024). Mgamis (2026) affirms that this capacity to name structural mechanisms of exploitation, not merely personal victimhood, marks a critical consciousness that exceeds what most women in comparable conditions articulate.

The third-dimension paternalistic men as the most dangerous form of domination is the most counter-intuitive of Firdaus's insights: *"The men I hated most were those who tried to advise me, or said to me that they wanted to save me from the life I was living... They cast themselves in the role of a hero a role they had failed to play in other circumstances"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 174). Hall's constructionist framework reveals the representational logic: men who beat Firdaus embody explicit domination, while men who want to save her embody domination disguised as care yet both rest on the same assumption that Firdaus is The Other requiring definition and intervention from men (Hall et al., 2024). Beauvoir identifies care-as-domination as one of the most effective mechanisms through which patriarchy maintains itself, precisely because it presents subordination as benevolence (Tong & Botts, 2024). Addison (2020) argues that Firdaus's radicalism lies in her ability to identify this false rescue. For Firdaus, these men do not seek to liberate her rather, they seek to fulfill their own masculine narcissistic needs by defining her as a soul in need of their guidance.

The fourth-dimension structural consciousness of women's collective oppression marks Firdaus's decisive move beyond personal experience: *"All women are victims of deception. Men impose the deception on women, then punish them for being deceived, oppressing them to the lowest level... tying them in marriage, and punishing them with hard labor for the rest of their lives"* (El Saadawi, 2025, pp. 169–170). In Hall's representational framework, shifting the subject from "I" to "all women" constructs the personal as structural and collective. El Saadawi's language system deploys five consecutive active verbs impose, punish, oppress, tie, punish all with men as subject and women as object, constructing systematic agency as male and systematic suffering as female (Hall et al., 2024). In Beauvoir's framework, Firdaus now understands the systemic mechanism itself: men create dependency, then punish women for the dependency they created (Tong & Botts, 2024). Prameswari et al. (2019) identify this transition from personal to structural-collective narrative as the clearest marker of achieved existential feminist consciousness.

The fifth-dimension existential consciousness of freedom as a threat to the system is reached when Firdaus interprets her own death sentence: *"They are sentencing me to death not because I killed a man... but because they are afraid to let me live. They know that as long as I am alive they*

will not be safe" (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 199). Through Hall's representational approach, the phrase "they are afraid" performs a decisive inversion: men who throughout the novel have been constructed as powerful agents beating, raping, confining, judging are suddenly constructed as fearful (Hall et al., 2024). Beauvoir's framework provides the theoretical explanation: the Subject-Other relation is inherently antagonistic, because the Subject (men) constructs its identity by negating The Other (women) so when a woman asserts herself as a free subject, she directly threatens the Subject's existence (Tong & Botts, 2024). Irmayani et al. (2024) identify this as Firdaus's highest existential consciousness: awareness not only of oppression, but of the fact that her existence as a free subject is itself the most fundamental act of resistance.

The sixth and most comprehensive dimension total rejection of the entire patriarchal system is declared in Firdaus's final statement: *"I said that you are all criminals you: the fathers, uncles, husbands, pimps, lawyers, doctors, journalists, and all men of all professions"* (El Saadawi, 2025, p. 198). The list moves deliberately from family to criminal to respected professional domains, refusing all distinctions society uses to separate good men from bad. Through Hall's conceptual system, this is a subversive representational construction: Firdaus appropriates the legal and moral language historically used to criminalize her and redirects it against the system itself (Hall et al., 2024). In Beauvoir's framework, this represents the fullest expression of transcendence Firdaus no longer defines herself in relation to men as the powerful Subject, she asserts herself as a subject who evaluates and defines the system (Tong & Botts, 2024). Mgami (2026) identifies this as the most radical moment of her consciousness, DeKeseredy (2021) argues that understanding violence against women as a product of patriarchal norms integrating all institutional layers rather than as individual misbehavior is the foundational analytical achievement of feminist sociology.

3.2.3. The Causal Relationship Between Accumulated Violence and the Formation of Firdaus's Views Toward Men

The analysis of both data categories reveals a dialectical causal relationship between Firdaus's accumulated experiences of violence and the formation of her views toward men a relationship that can be explained through the integration of both theoretical frameworks.

Through Hall's theory of representation (Hall et al., 2024), the novel constructs violence against Firdaus cumulatively across institutional contexts: every form of violence physical, sexual, psychological, and economic perpetrated by male figures from distinct social institutions (family, marriage, personal relations, and the state) consistently affirms one shared knowledge: that Firdaus's position as an object that may be harmed, exploited, and controlled is normalized across all layers of society. This cross-institutional consistency is what distinguishes the novel's representational strategy violence is not presented as a series of personal misfortunes but as the systematic product of a patriarchal structure. This finding addresses the gap identified in the literature review: while Syah et al. (2021), Saniro (2024), Zahra'ni et al. (2025), Nuraulia et al. (2025), and Lakda et al. (2024) have each analyzed violence or Firdaus's existence, none has traced the specific causal pathway from categorized, cross-institutional violence to the formation of progressively structural views toward men.

Through Beauvoir's existential feminism (Tong & Botts, 2024), the accumulation of violent experiences across institutions drives Firdaus from immanence toward transcendence through the six dimensions analyzed in Section 3.2.2. Each dimension does not merely repeat what came before but deepens the analytical level: from recognizing the pattern of individual perpetrators (dimension one), to understanding the economic architecture of exploitation (dimension two), to detecting domination even in its benevolent disguise (dimension three), to generalizing personal suffering into a structural condition shared by all women (dimension four), to recognizing that her freedom itself constitutes a systemic threat (dimension five), to declaring a total and comprehensive rejection of patriarchy as a unified system (dimension six). This progressive deepening rather than simple accumulation is what Beauvoir's concept of transcendence captures: it is not merely escape from immanence but the active assertion of oneself as a free subject capable of evaluating the very system that sought to define one as object.

4. Conclusion

This study has analyzed the representation of violence experienced by the character Firdaus and her views toward men in Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, integrating Stuart Hall's theory of representation with Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminist framework. Three principal scientific conclusions emerge.

First, the novel represents four categories of violence physical, sexual, psychological/verbal, and economic/structural as a systematic, cross-institutional pattern spanning the family of origin, marriage, personal relationships, and the state. Through Hall's constructionist approach, this is not a representation of isolated misfortunes but a carefully constructed knowledge: that Firdaus's subordinate position as an object is normalized and reproduced across every social institution in her life, revealing violence as a structural feature of patriarchy rather than aberrant individual behavior.

Second, Firdaus's position as The Other in Beauvoir's existential feminist framework is concretely manifested across every category of violence she experiences. Her body is beaten, sexually violated, discursively stripped of subject status through religious and legal language, and deprived of economic and spatial autonomy. This position is not natural but continuously reproduced through cultural norms, social institutions, and violent practices confirming that what appears as individual conduct is in fact systemic subordination.

Third, and most distinctively, this study demonstrates a dialectical causal relationship between the categorized accumulation of cross-institutional violence and the formation of Firdaus's increasingly structural views toward men. Each dimension of her views from existential anger through structural consciousness to total rejection represents a deeper level of transcendence, not mere repetition. The six progressive dimensions correspond to and are driven by the cross-institutional accumulation of violence, producing a trajectory in which Firdaus moves from recognizing individual perpetrators to understanding that all men, across all professions and institutions, function as participants in a single patriarchal system that systematically maintains women as The Other. This dialectical process violence driving transcendence, and transcendence producing ever-deeper structural analysis constitutes the novel's most significant contribution to feminist discourse on violence, and the present study's principal contribution to the existing literature.

This study contributes to communication studies by demonstrating how literary texts function as cultural sites that actively produce and reproduce meanings about gender relations and patriarchal power. Future research is encouraged to engage the original Arabic text or the authoritative English translation to capture linguistic nuances unavailable in translation, and to apply an intersectionality framework examining how class, ethnicity, and postcolonial positioning further shape the experience of violence in the novel.

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